

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MONTGOMERY
COUNTY, VIRGINIA HELD ON THE 26TH DAY OF MARCH, 2013 AT 6:00 P.M. IN
THE BOARD CHAMBERS AT THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER,
755 ROANOKE STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA

PRESENT:	James D. Politis	-Chair
	William H. Brown	-Vice Chair
	Annette S. Perkins	-Supervisors
	Mary W. Biggs	
	Gary D. Creed	
	Christopher A. Tuck	
	F. Craig Meadows	-County Administrator
	L. Carol Edmonds	-Deputy County Administrator
	Martin M. McMahon	-County Attorney
	Angie Hill	-Financial & Management Services Director
	Marc Magruder	-Budget Manager
	Ruth Richey	-Public Information Officer
	Judy Kiser	-Assistant to the County Administrator
ABSENT:	Matthew R. Gabriele	-Supervisor

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order. He announced that Supervisor Gabriele was absent due to an illness in his family.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Advertised Real Estate Tax Rate - 89¢ per \$100 of Assessed Value and Advertised Personal Property Tax Rate - \$2.55 per \$100 of Assessed Value

The Chair called the public hearing to order for the purpose of receiving citizens' comments on the County's advertised real estate tax rate of 89¢ per \$100 assessed value and the advertised personal property tax rate of \$2.55. The real estate tax rate represents a 2¢ increase from the current rate and the personal property tax rate represents a 10¢ increase from the current rate. The Board of Supervisors voted to advertise a maximum rate of 89¢ for real estate and \$2.55 for personal property. The Board of Supervisors may approve a rate at or below this rate. In order to approve a rate higher for real estate or personal property, the County would be required to re-advertise and hold another public hearing.

The Chair asked that each speaker come to the podium and state their name and address, and direct their comments to the Chair and the members of the Board, not to the audience or the county staff. Each speaker will be allowed five minutes. He explained that this was the Board's time to listen to the citizens, so members of the Board would not be answering questions during

the hearings. He asked that the audience please refrain from applauding between speakers, and that any written comments be left with the Clerk.

Sue Farrar Executive Director of the Montgomery Museum. When she came before the Board last year and requested additional funds to help with the repair of the museum's roof, a 161-year old building, the Board graciously provided \$5,000. Unfortunately, enough money was not raised; the bids came in quite high. The expectation is to begin the project early in September. She also thanked the Board for their continued support through their Challenge Grant, and expressed her appreciation for the Board's support.

Gary Fissell 660 Warren Ct., Christiansburg. Mr. Fissell reminded the Board that last year the real estate tax rate was raised by 12¢. He believes the Board should have raised the tax rate modestly in the years prior to last year. In spite of this, Mr. Fissell stated that he supports the proposed 2¢ tax rate increase. So many cuts have been made by the County, and when layoffs occur more work load is put on other employees and they are not compensated for the extra work load. He spoke of roads that are in need of repair, from pot holes to storm drains flooding when spring comes because of the debris inside the manholes, and not enough manpower or proper equipment to take care of it. And every time a teacher is cut from the school staff, it creates a larger class size. He asked those who oppose the tax increase to stop complaining and come up with a solution. He closed by saying he is proud that he lives in Christiansburg, Virginia.

Barbara Skinner 3583 Laurel Drive, Blacksburg. Ms. Skinner spoke before the Board in January and suggested that millions of dollars could be saved by increasing class sizes, decreasing administration and using a better but less costly inclusion model for special education. According to an article she read in the *Roanoke Times*, since 2008 Roanoke County schools have seen a decrease of funding of \$14 million. Roanoke County's school superintendent said "we've learned to do with less". Another article in the *Roanoke Times* reported that approximately 83% of the Roanoke County school budget goes to personnel costs. In contrast, MCPS personnel costs consume 88.5% of our budget. If we were to reduce our personnel costs to 83%, we could realize a savings of \$5 million. If we were to reduce personnel costs to 80%, the national average, we could save \$7.82 million.

She suggested that expenses skyrocketed because years after the collapse of the Blacksburg High School gym, we still do not properly address funding for maintenance. At the February 28th School Board meeting, the price for annual routine maintenance was given as \$2 million per year, which does not include the \$11 million in maintenance to cover deficiencies which we're told will be needed over the next five years. She stated that she is just as concerned about quality as she is spending. While Roanoke County has seen funding cuts in recent years, they're outscoring Montgomery County on SOLs. Montgomery County's Superintendent recently prepared a study on middle school scheduling which showed Roanoke County besting MCPS in 10 out of 11 SOL tests. In math the differences between the two districts were striking and quite significant. The example at the 8th grade level, the percent passing the math SOL was 74% in Roanoke County but only 38% in Montgomery County. It seems that Montgomery County has a math problem both in our schools and in local government budgeting. While observing the budget process for the past three years, she has seen the Board of Supervisors struggle each year to allocate as much money as possible for the schools. Although she is sure the Board thinks they are supporting education, handing over dollars without monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of usage is far from optimal for our children, and it is seriously hurting many stretched taxpayers.

Ms. Skinner has concluded that we don't need higher taxes and more money. We need a better and smarter school budget and suggested the need for a citizen group to look into our school budgeting and investigate the efficiency and effectiveness in our school spending. She asked that the Board of Supervisors vote no on increasing our taxes.

Sharon Brockman 710 West Main Street, Christiansburg. As she has done in previous years, Ms. Brockman said she was here to ask the Board of Supervisors one more time not to raise her family's taxes. She pointed out that the motto for Montgomery County is that freedom increases responsibility. Some might interpret that with an emphasis on the responsibility the county has to provide a justification for increasing the amount of money needed to provide services. She believes that would be an inaccurate interpretation. Our motto is an individual, personal responsibility, but the inevitable consequence is that every tax increase is a loss of freedom. Citizens with fewer responsibilities are inherently less independent. In 2013 the citizens have already seen their take home pay reduced by the end of the payroll tax holiday. Setting on Governor's McDonnell's desk is a \$6 billion transportation bill, and there is no way that bill can be implemented without an adverse impact on taxpayers. Ms. Brockman stated that everyone she knows is being negatively affected by the ongoing implementation of Obama Care. Taxpayers are always feeling the squeeze from the federal and state government even before the county takes aim. She asked the Board if they have ever thought about how many citizens are finding their real income less than it was prior to this recession. After last year's 12¢ tax rate increase, and a proposed 2¢ tax rate increase this year, she feels like it is perfectly reasonable to want to know if the Board will ever be satisfied.

Ms. Brockman commented that the elephant in the room is school funding. She doesn't believe this tax increase is proposed in order to adequately fund public safety or to give the Sheriff's Department a decent office which he so desperately needs. Increasing funding for the schools is no guarantee that teachers will receive a raise, because, as the school board likes to remind the Board of Supervisors at every opportunity, they can spend the money any way they see fit. This is predicated on the notion that more money always equals a better education, and is not universally accepted. She made reference to a previous speaker who commented that the personal property tax increase would add \$10 or \$20 per vehicle, but she pointed out that the concern was not \$20 but the fact that taxpayers are already taking hits from multiple angles and that the phrase "being nicked and dined to death" was not for naught. She asked the Board not to tighten their grips around the neck of Montgomery County's golden goose-the hard working taxpayers.

Jim O'Dowd 2341 Mt. Tabor Road, Blacksburg. Mr. O'Dowd spoke in support of the proposed 2¢ real estate tax rate increase. In addition to attending many of the Board meetings, he has also attended those of the School Board, and spoken with their individual School Board members and administrators. There is no fat left to trim in their budget and their needs are great. In 2000 the tax rate in the county was 68¢. If that amount is adjusted for inflation, it becomes 92¢ in 2013. That would be a 5¢ increase from where we are today. Mr. O'Dowd said he would support a 5¢ increase. He remembers the Board spent an enormous amount of energy last year and demonstrated courageous and responsible political leadership to get closer to a fiscal solid ground. A 2¢ tax rate increase this year would at least get us back to shallow waters. He asked the Board to support at least a 2¢ tax rate increase.

Jack Selcovitz High Rock Road, Pilot. Mr. Selcovitz spoke in opposition to the proposed 2¢ tax rate increase. He reminded everyone that the taxpayers are now paying 12¢ more than they were a year ago, which adds up to \$1.4 million dollars removed from the pockets of the taxpayers of Montgomery County. Dollars that could have been spent at local shops and

restaurants, spending that would have generated sales tax receipts, meals tax receipts, and new car purchases. Instead there has been a decline in new vehicle purchases and closing of retail stores and restaurants. Even a local icon like Grandma's just up the street from this building. Now six more people are out of a job; folks who have bills to pay; folks who can no longer afford to shop and eat out; folks who no longer pay income tax. These are some of the unintended consequences of removing millions of dollars from taxpayer budgets. He pointed out that the Board removed a million dollars to build a much needed animal shelter, yet the dogs and cats are still residing in the same dilapidated structure with absolutely no progress to report. That \$1 million sets alongside the other \$4.155 million in reserve funds. Mr. Selcovitz was told that keeping these reserves makes the county look good for the banks and commercial lenders. He maintains that if we're not going to borrow money for at least 5 to 7 years, why does that matter now. Our revenue growth of \$2.8 million this year alone could easily replenish the reserves, and our revenue continues to grow year after year. If the shelter is not going to be built, then the \$1 million could be used for the general budget instead of raising the tax rate.

Mr. Selcovitz went on to say that every time the county takes a dollar from a taxpayer, they take a piece of their freedom away. That dollar is now in the hands of the government to spend as they deem appropriate. The government gets to decide which charities and organizations are important. The taxpayer has lost the freedom to decide where to spend that money. He asked the Board to consider the civilian taxpayers of the county. When their own insurance premiums go up over 9% like the county's public employees, they have to pay out of their own pockets. When the county and the school board covers entire insurance increases, that's tantamount to giving employees a raise. He asked the Board to please have some compassion for the taxpayers, they are taxed enough already. And that, he explained, is what the Tea Party stands for "Taxed Enough Already". He asked that members of the board carefully go over the figures presented by the staff, including all reserves, carryovers, and revenues collected in excess of estimates, before they decide to set a higher tax rate for our citizens. The Board of Supervisors is expected to be fiscal stewards for the citizens, and is expected to work for the citizens of this county.

Susan W. Marinagas 305 Ruder Road, Blacksburg. Ms. Marinagas introduced herself as the mom of two young girls, one of whom is a student in first grade at Harding Avenue Elementary. She moved back here seven years ago in large part because of the excellence of our schools and she got involved because she found out that her daughter's school was potentially going to be closed last year. For the last twelve months she has attended a lot of the Board of Supervisors meetings, and a group across the county formed to involve parents to be partners with the Board of Supervisors and the School Board in finding more resources for our county schools. They recognize that they also need state funding as well as county funding, and the most important things we can do at the state and local level is fund our education. For that reason, Ms. Marinagas announced her support for the proposed tax rate increase. She stated that 278 parents signed a letter that was written and delivered to our state legislators in Richmond. But until we get more state revenue it's up to the locality to raise the money that is needed to keep the excellence in our school system.

Ms. Marinagas mentioned the county health rankings that were published in the *Roanoke Times* this week, with Montgomery County being 16th among the counties in the state. One of the largest predictors of health is education. She asked that education funding not be cut, because not only does that cut education for our kids, but it also impacts our public health and other things that are needed in the county. Once again she expressed her support for the proposed tax rate increase.

Susan Mayorga 185 Melody Drive, Christiansburg. Ms. Mayorga introduced herself as the case manager for Brain Injury Services of SWVA that serves the New River Valley area. She thanked the Board of Supervisors for their support, and asked that they consider their request of \$2,500, which is approximately 10% of their cost to support brain injury survivors in Montgomery County. This will help Brain Injury Services in their role as a vital link between folks that are brain injury survivors and ways for them to be more independent and more integrated in their community. 1.7 million people sustain a brain injury in the U.S. each year and 3.1 million live with a life-long disability as a result. Although there is not a lot of support available to brain injury survivors, they continue to successfully make a difference in survivors' ability to fulfill their service potential and to optimize their reintegration into their families and communities. Examples from the past year include:

Providing technology to a person who was left unable to read or write from a stroke. With a computer and scanner, this person can now take control of reading their own mail, is able to communicate with others via email by using the dictation feature of the computer and is now setting their goal on returning to school, and linking another survivor with assistance with employment and has successfully held a job for a year.

They are currently helping another person get admission to a residential facility in Montgomery County that specializes in rehabilitation of brain injury. This will keep the survivor close to home while intensely working on recovery while getting constant support – allowing the family/caregiver to avoid burnout, preserving the family relationship as well as allowing the caregiver to tend to their business here in Montgomery County.

Brain Injury Services of SWVA consistently provides knowledge, resources, and most importantly, hope, that is tailored to each one with the goal of being full participants in their community. This is as vital to Montgomery County as it is to the survivors.

Mike Griggs 602 Kelly Lane, Blacksburg. Mr. Griggs spoke in support of funding public education through our county taxes. He has four daughters, three of which are currently enrolled in elementary school in Montgomery County. In the past few years he has learned more about the school budget numbers, and finds the most telling number to be the cost to the people in the county. It is still below 10% of the state average, which is telling. He believes the county school system is underfunded. He reminded everyone that our founding fathers agreed on the basic founding principles of our nation, which we all know and appreciate today, with a responsibility to general education being extremely important to all of them. They realized that for society to advance and to support itself it was extremely important that it be educated. There is no doubt that one of the primary reasons for the success of our nation as a country and society today is due to the fundamental education that was put in place over 200 years ago by a tea party. Today we are faced with a difficult task of funding our local government's many county functions, of which public education is one of the most important. With federal funding and state funding being reduced, the Montgomery County School Board and the Board of Supervisors should feel a strong obligation to uphold the principles of our founding fathers in regard to properly, sufficiently and adequately funding public education. We need the funds from the federal as well as the state government, or we have to make it up somewhere else, and that's what we do in the county. Others here will argue that a tax increase at the county level for education is unacceptable right now. Mr. Griggs believes it would be completely unacceptable to do anything but adequately fund public education, sparing no expense as our founding fathers intended. He asked the Board of Supervisors to ensure that the future of our children is brighter than today.

Laura Gruss 1560 Harding Road, Blacksburg. Ms. Gruss spoke in support of the school budget. She had no awareness of school and county budgets or arguments about local tax increases until last spring when it became clear that her children's school, Harding Avenue Elementary, faced a very real threat of being closed if the county didn't kick in more money for public education. When she became involved in the process, she became aware of how critical our school needs are. Our school administrators, teachers and staff have done wonders in providing our kids with an excellent education despite an inadequate budget that keeps on shrinking. Contributions from the state and federal government are declining drastically, so it falls to local government to pick up the burden. She asked that the Board support the tax increases and the proposed 2014 budget, which will go far to ensure the future survival of our excellent county schools.

It has been suggested that since this past fiscal year has been a relatively good one for the county we should now live within our means and not raise taxes. Ms. Gruss maintained that it's time for our county to do some serious planning for the future, especially when it comes to schools, which is such a large portion of the budget. There are major capital expenses coming down the road for our schools, particularly in the Christiansburg strand which needs new buildings as well as major renovations. A 2¢ tax increase would allow us to put money in reserves to fund future capital expenditures for the schools. The county's population is growing and is expected to continue to grow over the next ten years. To provide all those kids with a good education we need a plan for future funding. The proposed tax increases would help provide a solid source of revenue for public education in the future.

Lindsay West 607 Giles Road, Blacksburg. Ms. West spoke in support of the proposed tax increase and budget saying that for fifty years she has been a strong supporter of schools and of quality public services, and for the resources to pay for those services. In order for Montgomery County to continue to grow and prosper it needs to provide the services and needs to provide the funds to keep up with the needs of all of the county citizens. During her twelve years of service as a member of the Board of Supervisors, and many other boards she has served on, it was her pleasure to be able to help provide those resources, whether they were in actual dollars or whether they were in people or allocation of money and resources and volunteer support. She commended the Board members for the work they have done. Increasingly, the responsibility for county citizens falls on the locality, and for a growing and prosperous county as Montgomery County is, to remain that way we need to provide the services and we need to come up with the dollars to be able to do that. She thanked the Board for advertising the rates as recommended by the County Administrator. She urged the Board to vote for the tax rate and budget as recommended.

Catherine Kincaid Ms. Kincaid read the following letter into the record from Bill Stephenson, 1205 Arrington Road, Blacksburg:

"I regret that I will be unable to attend your meeting on March 26, 2013, but request that you take into consideration my views on the budget. Having suffered from the imposition of a 16% tax increase last year, I am dismayed that you are proposing a further increase for the coming year. As I see it, you are not exercising sufficient control over the school board which has an insatiable appetite for taxpayers' money. The board is frittering away its allocation in the mistaken belief that more dollars will lead to a better education for our children. I would argue that you should demand better outcomes and insist on: larger class sizes; merit-based pay for teachers; changing the inclusion model so there is less class disruption, thereby allowing teachers to teach classes comprised of children who can learn at a similar rate; and reducing the administrative overhead in schools (and elsewhere in the county units).

You should also consider forming a citizen's advisory board to review our schools and determine why, despite lower class sizes and high quality buildings, MCPS performs at a lower level than schools in surrounding counties. The CAB should also review class offerings and weed out those with minimal academic content and set a minimum class size. As elected officials, I know some of you will argue that there is no need for a CAB since the tasks proposed are your responsibility. If that is the case, then I simply ask that you do your job. The school board will not compile budget requests unless they are directed to do so by a fiscally responsible board of supervisors.

Of course, I know that the majority of the board will continue to let the school board run rampant. However, the more you allocate, the more they will demand without ever considering quality or effectiveness. Already, one member of the school board is promoting "free" child care for infants at three months old. This is utter nonsense, as several studies have proven. Head Start was a failure, so now we will soon be asked to extend the concept and sink more money into a bottomless pit. Unless you take a firm stand NOW, Montgomery County will fall into severe financial distress in a few short years.

Yours sincerely
Bill Stephenson
1205 Arrington Road
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Tom Zuckerwar 3910 Fieldcrest, Riner. Mr. Zuckerwar stated that someone led him to believe that the bad weather and snow on March 26th is the fault of Montgomery County Public Schools. Some of the others in the audience would suggest that because of the recent real estate tax increases, we've seen fewer sales in automobiles and restaurants and merchandise at Wal Mart and Target. Mr. Zuckerwar said he would actually suggest that if law enforcement officials and teachers and administrators, and employees of Montgomery County received regular and fair pay increases, they would have more disposal income to go out and purchase automobiles and goods at Wal Mart and Target and eat at restaurants. He is not sure that argument necessarily holds water. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to speak, and for the opportunity to attend one of the county's community meetings at the Riner Volunteer Fire Department. During that meeting, Supervisor Bill Brown shared some comments from one of his constituents who said they would rather have their house burned to the ground than to pay taxes to support a county fire department. That same constituent said they would rather die from a heart attack in their front yard than to pay taxes to support local emergency services. Mr. Zuckerwar found himself unable to reconcile such statements. He explained that the argument for him becomes what is in the interest of the greater good? He believes the answer to such a challenge and such a problem is that the proposed budget increases, as well as the real estate and personal property tax rate increases, are there to serve the greater good by supporting the schools and the county operations. He urged the Board of Supervisors to adopt the budget and tax increases without modification.

Joe Ivers 1905 Forest Lane, Blacksburg. Mr. Ivers state that it has been very enjoyable, as a School Board member, working with the Board of Supervisors over the last six years, but as a citizen he wished to share his concerns. During the community meetings held by the Board of Supervisors recently, some of the supervisors indicated that the budget currently on the table would be the budget that would be on the table next month. If that means it was the final budget, then he would question the point of having this public hearing. Mr. Ivers explained that he is retired and on a fixed income, just as many of his neighbors are, and many of the neighbors of Board members. Many of them are the Montgomery County citizens who are all but forgotten.

He went on to say that he leads a group of men and women who volunteer to do home repairs for families in need throughout the County. These volunteers have assisted in helping over 150 families, with a goal having every family in Montgomery County live in a warm, dry, comfortable, safe home. In the process of volunteering all over the county, Mr. Ivers has met some wonderful people. The only difference between these people and us is our good fortune and their misfortune. One lady in Christiansburg said she wants her grandchildren to have a better life than she has had and the only way that can happen is through a better education. A lady in Pilot said the same thing, that's what she wants for her son. A couple on Teel Road in Christiansburg want this for their children. He talked to folks in Blacksburg Estates in Blacksburg, Mountain Creek community in Elliston, Five Points Road, Whipple Road, Yellow Sulphur Road, North Fork Road, people in Prices Fork and in Riner. They all want their children or grandchildren to have a better life, and that happens through a better education. A retired police officer agreed that \$10,000 a year to educate a child is cheap compared to the \$50,000 it would cost to keep an uneducated person in jail. And he talked with the Reverend Robert Jones on Nellie's Cave Road who believes that God and education are the two most important things anyone would have in their life today.

A. Paul Thomas Mr. Thomas said he wished to follow up on the previous remarks by saying he is kind of glad that he is not from Blacksburg, which means he has a somewhat more and broader understanding of what's going on in this county. First of all, this kind of exchange where you're trying to find out the disposition of what people are thinking about in this county isn't exactly practical. Where the Board of Supervisors is sitting up there and a few people are back here. How you could do it better is to just individually get out and circulate amongst the people and call on people at their home to find out what people really are saying. About the work of education, Mr. Thomas thinks that education is valuable but it can also be dangerous. The fact is that more money isn't always going to serve the end. If only there could be a greater emphasis on character building. How much better off all the people would be if younger people were taught the value of truth, good will toward all; the danger of stealing, cheating, all the things that put people in trouble with the law and put them in prison, and he believes if education could take up that cause in Montgomery County, then Montgomery County could be a light and be known all over the country as taking the right steps forward. But there have been a lot of causes that have limited education to the academic side. Mr. Thomas said he wanted to say something about truth, that we don't know too much about what's going on in schools and what is involved in the cost. Teachers' salaries for one thing, who knows how much a teacher's salary amounts to? When teachers come forward and want an increase in salary, my practical answer to that is how much do you make now in dollar figures, and what are the perks that accompany the job? One of the greatest perks of the job when Mr. Thomas was teaching, was summer vacation and fewer hours. He thanked the Board for allowing him the opportunity to speak.

Kelly Pleasant 2737 Old Fort Road in Prices Fork, Blacksburg. Ms. Pleasant spoke in support of the proposed budget and the tax increase it takes to fund it properly. She believes that now, more than ever, the future of our county depends on the safety of its citizens and the education of its youth. Montgomery County is growing and the needs of its citizens are changing. Education is becoming more complex, the demands on schools, teachers, and students are increasing, and in order for our schools to remain competitive in our region and in our state we must continue to fund the 2013 standards. Planning for the future makes good sense and is long overdue, waiting for another emergency to react financially is an unsound policy. Ms. Pleasant stated that she is an elementary school teacher and president of the Montgomery County Education Association, and a taxpayer. Years of cuts have led to tough decisions in our school system; these challenges have been met by teachers, staff, and administrators, but not without sacrificing and postponing improvements that are still needed. She suggested that we need to begin to put money back into

a healthy and growing school system and prepare the children for their future. She considers the proposed budget to be both balanced and fair. She thanked the Board for their past support and giving her the opportunity to speak in support of the proposed tax increase.

Phyllis Albritton 1003 Highland Circle, Blacksburg. Ms. Albritton expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to address the Board, and asked to correct one remark that was made earlier in the meeting in a letter from Bill Stephenson about Head Start. Ms. Albritton's research is showing that Head Start is making a difference. The children from those communities who are attending Head Start actually have more of a chance to graduate high school. She pointed out that the school system has some very good programs, such as the anti-bullying program, as well as a great program called "pass it on" – if you see someone doing something nice for someone else you pass on a little bracelet, and then you get a little bean. If you get the most beans for passing on at the end of the week, you get an award. As a member of the School Board she is extremely pleased. She is also pleased, and very proud of their drama program. With the cuts made by the state to education over the years, localities can't do much to make up the difference except increase the real estate tax rates.

Ms. Albritton attended the Board's community meeting in Riner on March 12th, and learned that in 1974 the decision was made to keep our four community school areas (strands). That means we need to fund them. Many of our schools are much smaller than other schools, but we are committed to all of Montgomery County, so needless to say, we all must pay for all of our students in the school system. Virginia is the 8th wealthiest state in the nation, but amazingly the county has been docked \$10 million by our state legislators. This makes it very difficult for the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Albritton expressed her appreciation for the Board's commitment to public schools. She asked that the Board support the proposed tax increases and the proposed budget.

Base Wagenbrenner 1628 Bow Hill Road in Sugar Grove, Christiansburg. Mr. Wagenbrenner stated that he cannot embrace this budget at all, none of it. He believes the first thing that should happen to this budget is to take 15% off, get rid of the greed, the waste and the pork, then you have real money for real government. He has two lists in his house, one list is needs, the other list is wants. Before he makes a purchase he looks to see which one it meets, so a whole lot of wants don't get it in his house. Mr. Wagenbrenner pointed to a lot of waste he sees in the county that needs to be cleaned up: a fleet of cars that run around in the county, most of the time with one person in it, running their mouth on a cell phone. The only time he sees two people in one of these vehicles is the inspectors. You see them at gun shops, convenient stores, drug stores, everywhere. He said a third of Christiansburg is now government buildings, and if more big buildings and more big government is what the county wants, he suggested the board members move up north where there are all kinds of big buildings, but nothing gets done. He suggested that the Board worry about their legacy for the County and not their own personal legacy. Another bothersome thing about the budget is that the county only has \$700,000 in working capital. After just going through a big reassessment and a large tax hike there should be more than \$700,000. Mr. Wagenbrenner went on to express his disagreement about the sheriff. The budget shows sheriff for the state \$6 million. We don't elect a sheriff for the state, we elect a sheriff for Montgomery County. That money could go to the sheriff of Montgomery County. He asked that this money be taken away from the state sheriff and if Richmond wants a state sheriff, let them pay for it. He pointed out that the budget has general contingencies and a special contingencies, and neither one has money in them. He asked why Montgomery County should pay \$17,600 for a law library when it's just a few lawyers using it. If they want to use it, they pay for it. There is nothing in school construction capital for 2013, but there is \$1.4 million for 2014. How do you know that when the buildings haven't even been built. Mr.

Wagenbrenner said he came in to ask for a need and a want – to put new light poles all the way around the new courthouse, and get rid of the mess that is there now. He does not see any results out of his tax dollars, but if new light poles are put all the way around the new courthouse, he would feel like he was getting something for his taxes.

John Early 931 High Top Road, Blacksburg. Mr. Early quoted from articles in the *Roanoke Times*, one of which said that one member of the Board of Supervisors said the biggest majority of people in Montgomery County don't know anything about business. In Mr. Early's opinion, when you go and borrow a bunch of money that you don't have money to pay back, and then you add the burden to the taxpayers, somebody's not using business sense, and that tells him they're not using common sense. He quoted Supervisor Gary Creed as saying "let's weigh the situation – if we have the money to pay for it go ahead and do it...". We have a governor that says "well if we don't give the county any money, the counties will figure out a way to get the extra money", so they figure out how to get the extra money, they raise the local taxes. And everybody asked for raises and asked for the citizens to help pay their retirement fund.

Mr. Early stated that he has lived in Montgomery County all his life, and had three children who went through the school system. He went to the Merrimac school and Prices Fork School and the old Blacksburg High School, and never had any of the modern conveniences like they have now. He said he is not against the modern conveniences, but the schools that are being built now look more like the corporate research center. That is not going to help children learn.

In looking back at his tax statements from the 1960's he paid \$64 a year in real estate taxes. He is retired now and living on a fixed income and it is costing him approximately \$100 a month just to live in Montgomery County. When the cost of his supplementary insurance was raised in January, nobody (hollered) to help him pay his insurance. Nobody (hollered) and said they were going to help him with the gas prices, grocery prices, or medication. The citizens cannot bear the burden for everybody's retirement. The citizens cannot bear the burden for everybody's insurance. No one is bearing the burden for the citizens. If the Board approves the proposed tax increases, that means citizens are going to have to sell their homes and move into a retirement center, or if possible move out of the county just so they can survive.

Mr. Early explained that he is not against helping anyone, he is not against the schools, but he believes that when the public is asked to give their opinion, their opinion doesn't mean anything. He believes the tax rate has already been set.

Mark Cherbaka 817 Montgomery Street, Blacksburg. Mr. Cherbaka stated that he got involved in last year's budget process and this year's budget process, as well as the schools' budget process. After last year's intensive discussions and process he expected to see a lot of people involved, a lot of scrutiny of the school budget and exposure of all the waste he keeps hearing about, so he got involved along with a lot of other parents. He felt there was a very real risk of having our schools closed, so it was in their best interest to find this waste and to eliminate it, and they didn't see that. What they saw was the budget had already been cut to the bone. They saw years of delay for urgent needs the schools had. They didn't see a lot of involvement in the process from a lot of the people who were against the budget last year. After being involved for the past year, it became apparent to him that what we are facing is not a spending problem, what we're facing is a funding problem. And it goes beyond the schools, it applies to the county as well. Ironically, it is the state that has hurt the counties and caused a lot of this through their own austerity measures and we keep hearing from people that the solution to this is more austerity measures at the county level. Mr. Cherbaka believes that our county and our citizens deserve a lot better than that. He believes what the Board of Supervisors has advertised is a really good

compromise and he supports this year's budget for that reason. He also supports the decision to put aside money for the future and saving money for capital expenditures down the road which will definitely be needed in Christiansburg, and also in the Shawsville area. He thanked the Board for their investment in the future of our County.

Roger Averhart Whipple Drive, Blacksburg. Someone said earlier that our founders would have been pushing for education. Mr. Averhart questions whether they would have turned over in their graves if they would see what we have done today with spending. Our country is about \$17 trillion in debt, the state has many problems, and we see it at the local level, and we still hear people asking Washington to give us money. If anything is true, we need to ask Washington to get out of our lives, especially education, because he is not sure that was ever intended anyway. We need to stop looking to Washington for money and expecting money to be given to us. And the same can be said with the state. The problem in Montgomery County is a spending problem because we have built schools in such a quick and unnecessary way in his opinion. He believes Blacksburg will be opening its third new high school in 60 years, and that is unheard of. The Blacksburg high school Mr. Averhart attended was built in the late 1950's, the high school on Patrick Henry Drive was opened in the 1970's, and now we are getting ready to open a new high school. He reminded everyone of a lady who spoke earlier that said she went to a school, or knows of a school, that was built in the 1920's and is still in operation right now. You can go to Giles County and see Giles High School which was built about the same time as the Blacksburg high school that was built in the 1950's. Mr. Averhart repeated that Montgomery County has a spending problem. He has the understanding that the new school is \$10 million over budget, and a lot of it is on the backs of people in the county that are on fixed incomes or in the lower income status on the totem pole. He urged everyone to consider this and to have a back bone and stand up to the school board and make them more accountable for the spending they have put on to the Board of Supervisors. He asked that the Board vote against the proposed 2¢ increase for the citizens of Montgomery County.

Penny Franklin 857 Woodrow Road, Christiansburg. A member of the school board for 14 years, Ms. Franklin explained that this year the School Board sent forth a new base budget. For many years she would not support a budget that was sent to the Board of Supervisors that was not needs based because if you need it, you need it. For the last several years they have had to cut millions of dollars and this is not fair to our children here in Montgomery County. Ms. Franklin believes public education is the equalizer. If we are not able to pay for the equipment, the teachers, and the buildings that are needed to give our children the education they need in the 21st century, because they are not just going to live here in Montgomery County, or even if they just live in Montgomery County, they will be competing on a global level. That is apparent every day, everybody is wired around the world and if you're not able to understand what's going on and how you compete with that then you're not going to be successful. We're not going to be able to attract the businesses here in Montgomery County. When the issue of Blacksburg High School arose and whether to build it or not the folks at Virginia Tech were screaming, "you have to, you can't attract folks unless we have a good building, a good school in Blacksburg". We have our Superintendent who came in and said, as far as technology, you've got to do some catching up and we've been trying to do that and she has put things in place that are just remarkable. If anyone would walk into our schools, which have been turned into 21st century schools, and see how these children interact and how these children are able to use their minds on a whole different level. This is not 1930, this is 2013. Ms. Franklin stated that she supports the budget.

As far as the other needs in the County, she was involved with the Sheriff's Department when they first started their citizen's academy and her eyes were wide open as to the needs there. And

with all the other services that we enjoy, such as fire and rescue. If they went away, we would not be real happy with that. She told the Board she appreciates the work they all do and hopes they will support the budget as presented.

Frank Symanoksie Christiansburg. Mr. Symanoksie sent the following e-mail message to the Board of Supervisors:

“Although I have asked to be included on the speakers list it is increasingly likely that I cannot be there in person. Please include my comments below in the board documents for the public hearing tonight.

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors

The supervisors are all good citizens. You have chosen to be public servants to work for the good of the citizens of Montgomery County. Is that right? Please read that again. Yet here we are again at the annual county hot air contest on debt and taxes. Citizens scrimp to the bone and businesses fail due to tax hikes, from every angle...on real estate alone 25% increase in three years and even greater averaged over the previous 10 years. Citizens are again telling you to stop running up the credit card and ask why you do not follow common sense finances as they do.

It is evident to everyone in the county that you are infatuated with the nationally recognized failed school system programs while other county services just get by. Just for starters, we truly appreciate the great essential service of the Sheriff's Department. We do not appreciate 25% and growing cost overruns on school construction or pleasant unnecessary retreats for the school board...et.ad nauseam.

Meanwhile, as we struggle you follow the lead of VT with its gargantuan capital projects turning VT into a Hokie stone metropolis and entertainment capital of Virginia. It has to be the glitter of VT's endless building program that entices you into outlandish spending of our money on public schools which serve the benefits and ego of the educators rather than the benefit of the students. When will you learn there is no free money?

Most families have been forced to cut far more than 2% from their essential needs. You should not be on the Board if you fail to understand that the county can cut more than 2% from wasteful spending or unearned taxes. If you really work to benefit the County prove it for a change. We consent for you to only approve zero tax increase this year.

Francis Symanoskie”

There being no further speakers, the Chair closed the public hearing and declared a 10 minute recess at 7:25 p.m. before beginning the public hearing on the FY 2014 budget. The Board reconvened at 7:35 p.m.

Advertised 2013-2014 Budget - \$167,868,476

To receive citizens' comments with regard to the advertised FY 2013-2014 Budget.

The Chair called the public hearing to order for the purpose of receiving citizens' comments on the County's Advertised Budget for Fiscal Year 2013-2014, in the amount of \$167,868,476, and reminded everyone that the rules for the first public hearing would apply to this public hearing as well.

Kelly Cass Executive Director of Mountain View Humane. Ms. Cass addressed the Board about the need for Mountain View Humane to continue their low-cost spay/neuter project. Mountain View has provided over 12,750 low-cost spay/neuters since they opened in 2010. So in the last two and a half years they have done almost 13,000 animals at their Christiansburg clinic alone, not counting what they do at their Roanoke clinic. They have started to sterilize any dog or cat regardless of the owner's ability to pay, and the community needs to continue to address that because of the overpopulation problem we still face. Last year, Montgomery County provided a subsidy for \$30,000 and they are very appreciative of that. Over 4,200 cats were fixed that live in Montgomery County and they still haven't made a dent. They hear stories every about how pets find their owners. But in a lot of cases these aren't members of the family, they are simply cats that crawled under their porch and dropped five kittens, and ask what should they do. Their answer, when they had this funding was although there is not a shelter in Montgomery County for cats, here's what the County can do for you, and they would help them with spaying/neutering the animals. The impact those funds had on those animals and the thousand or so people who brought them in, was great, and important to them. Mountain View Humane strives every year to improve their services and increase the numbers. Ms. Cass pointed out that spaying/neutering through Mountain View Humane is the fiscally responsible thing to do. For the price it costs to subsidize one spay/neuter is less than one fourth the cost to care for one homeless animal. She asked the Board of Supervisors to once again support Mountain View Humane, at whatever level they see fit.

Bruce Stanger 2159 Peppers Ferry Road, Christiansburg. Mr. Stanger sees a lot of wants in the budget, like the request from the previous speaker. It may be a viable cause but it is not something for tax dollar funding. Montgomery County needs to be fiscally responsible and he puts the burden of that on the Board of Supervisors. He pointed out that the Board manages the money, but it is the taxpayers' money. We can't just spend money for every want we have, these wonderful projects made the schools want more and more, but we have to be fiscally responsible and that is the Board's responsibility.

Connie Froggatt 1751 Brush Mountain Creek Road in Montgomery County. As the parent representative on the building committee for Blacksburg High School, she assured the Board that neither Blacksburg High School, Auburn High School, nor Auburn Middle School is \$10 million over budget. They are well within their budget, and on schedule. The square footage for the Blacksburg High School was cut, as suggested by a Board member, to live within their means. After her children were all in school, she went back to school as a volunteer. That was more than 12 years ago and she has been there ever since. She has seen good times and some bad times at the school, and we are in some very bad times. Last year she donated an entire cart of paper to Harding Avenue Elementary because they had run out by this time last year. We are thirteen years into the 21st century and we still don't have schools with 21st century technology. Members of the building committee went to northern Virginia and D.C. to tour their schools. In Loudoun County, a new high school has been built every year, for the past ten years, so we are barely keeping up. She stated that taxpayers' money is not being wasted, and the teachers are not over-paid. Many times she has watched as one of the teachers pulled a few dollars out of their pocket at the book fair for some child who could not afford to buy their own book, when they were struggling to buy books for their own children. During her twelve years as a volunteer she has seen teachers doing amazing things and they deserve better, and our children deserve better. In reference to a previous speaker who spoke of their legacy, she suggested that their legacy is sitting in our public schools. Two of the best ways to get out of poverty are good health care and education. Ms. Froggatt expressed her support for the proposed budget and tax rates.

There being no further speakers, the Chair thanked everyone for turning out, and declared the public hearing closed. The County Administrator announced that the Board of Supervisors has scheduled a work session for April 8th to further discuss the proposed budget and tax rates, and will vote on the budget and tax rates at a special meeting on April 15th.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned to April 8, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
James D. Politis
Chair

ATTEST: _____
F. Craig Meadows
County Administrator